



Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center
DEPARTMENT OF NURSING
CLINICAL
POLICY AND PROCEDURE

SUBJECT: ASSISTING THE PATIENT USING AN
INCENTIVE SPIROMETER

Policy No.: C137.16
Effective Date: 03/1999
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Purpose of Procedure: To prevent or treat atelectasis, loosen secretions, and strengthen respiratory muscles.

Physician's Order Required: No

Performed By: RN, LVN, RCP, PT, Affiliating Nursing Students – under the direction of a licensed nurse

Equipment: Incentive Spirometer

Procedural Steps:

1. Explain the procedure and its purpose to the patient and family
KEY POINT: Optimal results are achieved with pre-treatment instructions.
2. Place the patient in a comfortable sitting position or semi-Fowler position to promote optimal lung expansion.
3. If necessary, coordinate treatment with the administration of pain medication to avoid discomfort. Instruct and assist patient with splinting of incision, when applicable.
4. Explain how to use incentive spirometer to the patient.
 - a. With the unit in an upright position, instruct the patient to exhale normally, and insert the mouthpiece and close the lips tightly around the mouthpiece.
 - b. Inhale slowly and deeply as possible.
 - c. Retain the entire volume of air and keep the indicator cup suspended at approximately the same level for as long as they can (at least 5 seconds).
KEY POINT: Sustaining the inspiratory effort helps to open closed alveoli.
 - d. Instruct the patient to remove the mouth piece and exhale normally. Allow the patient to relax and to take several normal breaths before attempting another breath with the spirometer.
 - e. Repeat the exercise. The patient may take 10 breaths every 1 to 2 hours while awake. .
KEY POINT: Usually one incentive breath per minute minimizes patient fatigue and prevents hyperventilation. If the patient starts to feel dizzy or faint, stop and instruct the patient to take normal breaths.

Special Considerations:

1. If the patient is scheduled for surgery, teach the patient how to use the spirometer before surgery so that the patient can concentrate on the instructions and practice the exercise.
2. If applicable, remove the patient's dentures to create a better seal.

Contraindications:

1. Incentive spirometer is contraindicated for patients who cannot cooperate or receive instructions on the proper use of the device.
2. Generate adequate inspiration because of pain, diaphragmatic dysfunction, or opiate analgesic use.

Patient/Family Education Is To Include:

1. The benefit, technique, and frequency of use.

Documentation:

1. Document use of incentive spirometer on the medical record
2. Document patient / family education and response on the Patient Education section of the medical record

Revised by: Julie Villalobos, MSN, RN

References:

Hudson RCI Incentive Deep Breathing Exerciser Air-EZE Manufacturer's Instruction/Guidelines

Lippincott Procedures. (2022). Incentive spirometry.

03/99 – Revised
08/01 – Revised
08/04 – Reviewed
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